

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUENOS 08211 171649Z

46

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 H-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

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R 171625Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3831

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 8211

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: FATIGATTI EXPLANATION OF CHECK BACKFIRES

1. CLARIN DECEMBER 14 REPORTED THAT IN INTERVIEW WITH COMODORO RIVADAVIA NEWSPAPER CRONICA GENERAL (RET) ERNESTO FATIGATTI, VICE PRESIDENT OF JUSTICIALIST CRUSADE, HAD GIVEN NEW EXPLANATION FOR THE FAMOUS CHECK SIGNED BY MRS. PERON AGAINST CRUSADE FUNDS. FATIGATTI REPORTEDLY EXPLAINED THAT MRS. PERON WAS SIMPLY HONORING HER HUSBAND'S WISH THAT LEGACY OF EVA PERON'S SISTERS BE PAID. SINCE MRS. PERON HAD NOT HAD MONEY AT MOMENT TO CARRY OUT THIS REQUEST, FATIGATTI REPORTEDLY CONTINUED, SHE FOLLOWED ADVICE OF THEN MINISTER OF INTERIOR ANTONIO BENITEZ AND DREW A CHECK AGAINST THE FUNDS OF THE CRUSADE, INTENDING TO REPLACE IT. WHEN ERROR OF THIS PROCEDURE WAS POINTED OUT TO HER, SHE IMMEDIATELY WITHDREW CHECK.

2. FATIGATTI NEXT DAY DENIED THAT HE HAD MADE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. CRONICA COUNTERED BY INSISTING THAT HE HAD MADE THEM AND CLAIMING TO HAVE TAPE TO PROVE IT. MEANWHILE, FATIGATTI'S "NEW EXPLANATION" HAS CAUSED A FLURRY IN PRESS AND IN CONGRESS. THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS INDICATED IT WILL ASK TO INTERPOLATE BENITEZ, AND FEDERAL JUDGE FASOLINO HAS ASKED BOTH BENITEZ AND FATIGATTI TO APPEAR AS WITNESSES IN THE CASE. IN PUBLIC STATEMENT BENITEZ DID NOT DENY FATIGATTI'S ALLEGATIONS. LAST MONTH, HOWEVER, HE TOLD EMBOFF PRIVATELY THAT ALLEGATIONS THAT HE HAD ADVISED MRS. PERON TO DRAW CHECK AGAINST CRUSADE FUNDS WERE "LIES."

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PAGE 02 BUENOS 08211 171649Z

3. COMMENT: FATIGATTI'S EXPLANATION DIFFERS FROM EARLIER SEMI-OFFICIAL EXPLANATIONS THAT SHE HAD USED WRONG CHECKBOOK BY MISTAKE. THIS WAS BAD ENOUGH. FATIGATTI'S VERSION IS EVEN WORSE. IT SUGGESTS PRESIDENT WAS AT BEST INCREDIBLY NAIVE AND HER CHIEF MINISTER NOT ABOVE STRETCHING THE LAW. FATIGATTI'S DENIAL SIMPLY ADDED SPICE. IT IS CLEAR TO PUBLIC THAT SOMEONE IS LYING AND THAT SOMETHING IS AMISS. THE MORE MRS. PERON'S SUPPORTERS TRY TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE CHECK INCIDENT, THE DEEPER THEY DIG THEMSELVES IN.

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